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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the nature and extent of continuing education and management training programs used by apparel retail companies and to document program content, objectives, methods, assessment techniques, and evaluation procedures. Information was gathered through qualitative research, using the multiple-case study method, with an open-ended questionnaire and interviews with 15 apparel retail managers and trainers. The findings show that, since the restructuring of the selected companies during 1995 and 1996, overall educational reimbursement to employees decreased. Training programs used both on-the-job and classroom methods and were conducted primary in stores, with managers responsible for most of the training. Assessment tools varied, with observational techniques, examinations, self-evaluations, and reviews reported. Participants commented on the lack of overall program evaluation, training consistency, and communication. Conclusions of the study indicate that management training content was limited to technological advances and had little content pertaining to the changing demographics of employees. Methods and assessment tools used in training were conducive to learning. Program goals and objectives were not always clearly defined, and evaluations of the effectiveness of training programs were rarely conducted. The following recommendations were made: retailers should update programs, consider all employees as potential trainers, use different teaching methods and assessment techniques, standardize and evaluate training programs, and continue to develop curriculums. (Contains 23 references.) (KC)

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THE EDUCATION OF RETAIL MANAGERS THROUGH MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS IN APPAREL RETAIL ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the nature and extent of continuing education and management training programs used by apparel retail companies; and to document their programs according to their content, objectives, methods, assessment techniques, and evaluation procedures. Methodology was based on qualitative research, using the multiple-case study method, with an open-ended questionnaire. Interviews of apparel retail managers and trainers gave insights into: (a) the content of education and management training programs, (b) the training methods, (c) the assessment tools, and (d) the evaluation techniques used in those training programs.

The findings show that, since the restructuring of the selected companies during 1995 and 1996, overall educational reimbursement to employees had decreased. Training programs used both on-the-job and classroom methods, and were conducted primarily in stores. Managers were responsible for most of the training. Assessment tools varied, with observational techniques, examinations, self-evaluations, and reviews reported. Participants commented on the lack of overall program evaluation, training consistency, and communication.

Conclusions of the study indicate that management training content was limited to technological advances and had little content pertaining to the changing demographics of employees. Methods and assessment tools used in training were conducive to learning. Program goals and objectives were not always clearly defined. Evaluations of the overall effectiveness of a training program were rarely conducted.

Recommendations are that retailers and educators should: (a) update programs to meet the technological and human relation needs of a changing retail environment, (b) consider all company employees as potential trainers, (c) utilize different assessment techniques and methods of teaching, (d) standardize and evaluate training programs, (e) improve communication among retail company personnel, and (f) continue to develop curricula that include communication, feedback and assessment techniques, and field practica.

Introduction

The changing workplace, the reorganization of retail corporations, and the growing need for cooperation among industry, government, and education have made many retail companies reassess the need for the education and training of their workforce. Retail companies have merged and acquired other retailers. Since the late 1980s, the industry has changed from a seller's market to a consumer-oriented one. Government regulations pertaining to employees and consumers have been

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increasing. All of these have made the assessment and evaluation of education and training opportunities an important function of retail organizations. As Crawford and Webley noted, "Continuing education and training of the workforce is rapidly emerging as a crucial problem for the 1990s in the USA, the UK, Canada, and indeed among all developed nations" (1992, p. 1).

Both apparel retail managers and their organizations need education and development programs. The evolution of the company, operational changes, smooth succession of managers for top-level positions, job performance and improvement for managers, and preparations for advancement are equally important to both the careers of managers and the survival and growth of businesses (Black, 1979). The education and development of new and experienced retail managers is fundamental for the growth of a retail company.

Although their goals are different, there is a need for collaboration among businesses, government, and higher education facilities to expand the ability of managers to educate themselves and the workforce (Matthews and Noorgaard, 1984). This study is important both to educators and retailers. "The emphasis on educational accountability requires that students pursuing retailing careers be prepared through related coursework" (Woodward, 1992). Furthermore, high personnel turnover rates are an expensive problem within the retail industry. The cost of training personnel is high. According to Pettijohn and Pettijohn (1994), the amount spent on retail sales training in 1990 averaged $3,737 per trainee. The use of successful training techniques could reduce the costs of educating new personnel and of retraining burned-out managers, and lower turnover rates.

Purpose and Objectives

The major purpose of the study was to explore, document, and describe the nature and extent of continuing education and management training programs used by apparel retail companies. Questions of the study included, but were not limited to:

1. What were the content and objectives of the continuing education and management training programs used by the sample retailers? Were these programs job specific and technical or did they also include "human relations" topics?
2. Who did the training? Where and when was training held?
3. What methods and assessment techniques did the trainers use? Did the trainee receive feedback?
4. Were evaluation procedures used in the companies' training programs? How did the trainer measure the effectiveness of a particular program? How were goals and objectives of the total program evaluated?

An additional purpose of this study was to inform educators and retailers about retail management training practices to better prepare their students and employees. Studying the content and methods used in retail management programs could help educators develop curricula that will help their students to be knowledgeable and prepared for the workplace.

Theoretical and Conceptual Base and Related Literature

The education and development of new and experienced retail managers is fundamental for the growth of a retail company. Prior to World War II, management training programs were rare

(Black, 1979). However, by the 1990s, many retail companies had organized human resources or training departments that oversaw the development of their managers' education.

The pedagogy of retail management training has developed into a science similar to teaching in an educational institution. Certain elements are identical in planning a successful educational or training program. A trainer is a teacher who must understand both the company's and the trainee's philosophies, objectives, and goals in order to plan a program that is profitable for both the company and the employee. To develop the best methods and resources to reach those aims, a trainer should continually assess and evaluate instructional aids, the training program, and the comprehension and resulting behavior of the trainee (Callahan, Clark, and Kellough, 1992).

"Raising Retail Standards," developed by the National Retail Federation (Reda, 1995), as well as Ahern's (1982) study, concentrated on training for entry-level positions in retailing. McCord (1983), for the National Institute of Education, documented tuition reimbursement by retailers. Training theory research identified various categories of variables that enhanced learning effectiveness. Baldwin and Ford (1988) recognized three of these--learning experience, individual characteristics, and work environment--. However, Berardinelli, Burrow, and Jones (1995) reported that practical impact on organizational performance is what makes training significant. The practical variables Shepherd and Ridnour (1995) examined included variables in methodology of training. Although the Shepherd and Ridnour study was limited to sales training, not retail management training, the analysis of methods and contents laid a foundation for this study.

Research Methods and Procedures

Sample

The sampling design was goal-oriented, as defined by Wiersma (1991). The goal was to interview personnel in apparel retail stores' home offices or training departments. Wiersma (1991) also stated that practicality and economy are justification for selecting a particular sample. Thus, the sample selected was located in one particular state. A list of retail companies was randomly selected from a list of businesses meeting the following criteria:

1. Operated a minimum of 50 nationally located branches, as listed in Fairchild's Retail Stores Financial Directory 1996 (Benjamin, 1996).
2. Listed in the state's "Service Directory, 1994-1995," classifying businesses by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Manual (1987).
3. Represented (SIC) industry groupings—5311, department stores; 5611, men's and boys' clothing and accessories; 5621, women's clothing stores; 5632, women's accessory and specialty stores; children's and infants' wear stores; 5651, family clothing stores; 5661, shoe stores; or 5699, miscellaneous.

The interviewees within each company were selected for their expertise and their different perspectives about apparel retail management training and education. Two trainers and three managers from each of three companies were interviewed. The selection of the interviewees reflected replication logic and developed descriptive scenarios. This balance in the choice of interviewees represented different perspectives within the study as Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 69) suggested.

Since the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, document, and describe the arena of apparel retail management education and training, the use of this sample documented both the variations and the similarities of those programs. This purposeful sampling (Seidman, 1991)--defining terms, determining the range of population, narrowing the population by sites, and selecting the levels of groups within the sites--enabled the manageability of that population. Descriptive and conceptual categories could be developed.

Instrument

A fourteen page questionnaire was developed for the interviews. Questions were developed after completion of a literature review of studies concerning qualitative research methods and an overview of the apparel retail industry, including management turnover, education, and training methods. Questions were written to document apparel retail education and training--its content, assessments, and evaluation. A panel of experts including a researcher, a trainer, and a manager (who were not involved in this study) reviewed the questionnaire. Closed-ended questions were used for demographics including length of employment, position, and experience. Open-ended questions were employed to group similar topics such as: pedagogical ideas, educational objectives, methods of training, assessment, evaluation, and perceived results.

Procedure

The use of qualitative research and the multiple-case study with an interview technique provided an appropriate method for examining the content and objectives of the education of retail managers through management training programs in apparel retail organizations. I.E. Seidman's (1991) method of conducting interviews was adapted for this study. The study's design helped to maintain data collection protocol and allowed for the use of grounded-theory analysis.

The study's boundaries were limited to three apparel retail companies in a selected state. The three store types selected were a department store, a specialty store, and an off-price apparel store. To ensure validity of data, a detailed plan for collected data was established. First, contact was made by telephone. A request for interview, confirmation letter, and follow-up prior to the interview were repeated in each case. After the interviewee signed the consent form, the interview was audio-taped and the interviewer administered the same questionnaire with each participant.

A multiple-case study format was developed. Replication logic in this multiple-case study was analogous to a quantitative study's use of multiple experiments in sampling logic (Yin, 1994, p. 45). That is, interviews, data categorizing, and analysis for each of the three companies that were examined were conducted in the same way. Field notes, other notes, and transcripts of the interviews were made. This would enable replication for any future study.

Procedures for data management, reduction, and display were developed. Data were transcribed, categorized, indexed, and examined for analysis using the Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing computer package (QSR NUD•IST®) (Qualitative Solutions & Research Pty. Ltd., 1996). Steps in data analysis were identified. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The interviews were stored into the data analysis computer program, using text only data as an on-line document. The text was reviewed and classified by subject areas and classifications, and segmented by units. Each text unit was examined and defined. Indexing and patterning of classified units enabled the researcher to analyze the documents by text unit category

and to interpret the data within a thematic framework.

The study's design incorporated a three-in-one multiple-case design. Data were gathered from three different retailers and analyzed as one unit. The entire analysis and report of findings consisted of cross-case analysis with individual cases dispersed throughout the findings. This method of analysis, multiple sources, and protocol helped to maintain anonymity of the subjects and increased the reliability of the study.

The strategy used for analyzing this research was based on the grounded-theory approach. Categories were generated until theoretical saturation was met. That is until no other new categories or themes were found. Grounded-theory analysis not only permitted the categorizing of data, but also allowed for linkages. This strategy built more reliability into the study.

In order to use grounded-theory analysis, the researcher followed the following steps, as adapted from Bryman and Burgess (1994, pp. 4-7):

1. immersion into data by listening to the interviews and reading the transcripts,
2. examination of the study's objectives by using the questionnaire and identifying themes,
3. labeling of topics and looking at developed patterns,
4. coding of each individual transcript, and
5. looking at patterns, attitudes, and experiences of the interviewees.

Two basic principles of qualitative research were followed: First, completeness was met by choosing people that are knowledgeable about the subject. Interviews were conducted and the subjects were allowed to talk until a sense of the meaning of a concept or a process was understood. Second, saturation was brought about when the narratives repeated the same events and similar varieties of interpretation occurred (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 73).

Findings

Data collected for the study of the education of retail managers through management training programs in apparel retail organizations consisted of non-numerical text units from 15 interviews of managers and trainers within three apparel retail companies of a selected state (Table 1). A list of 52 nodes (categories) used in the study was extrapolated from 14,125 text units. Information concerning the objectives and questions of the study was documented and analyzed, using either descriptive or conceptual categories.

Table 1
Positions and Experience of Interviewees

Position	n	Average Years in Retail
Director of Training	3	11
Training and Development Manager	3	8
Sales Manager	3	6
Store Manager	6	10
Totals	15	9

The following are examples of the interviewees' perceptions to the study's questions.

1. What were the goals, content, and objectives of the continuing education and management training programs used by the sample retailers? Were these programs job specific and technical or did they also include "human relations" topics?

Restructuring of companies, both consolidation and expansion, was affecting the organizational structure of these retailers. Maintaining profitability and the continuity of management personnel within these companies were the most important goals of training. (Other goals both company oriented and personnel oriented are reported in Table 2.) One person concluded:

> It's the bottom line. It's how we're going to increase sales and, you know, the two major goals of our company are to increase sales and develop people. They both tie in, if you develop people you will increase sales and those are the two priorities. And, to do that, training is obviously a major initiative in developing people.

The managers that were interviewed said that management and staff shortage was a major problem and that to train a potential manager was time intensive. For example, one manager, concerned about staffing problems, said:

> Well, they plan on opening more stores. However, they're consolidating some of the management. Some of the smaller stores are going to have one manager for two stores as opposed to two. So, it's going to affect everybody.

The interviewees pointed out that many managers are career-oriented and that they wanted to improve their skills. "Some people, who certainly want to get ahead, usually end up taking material home and learn themselves." One trainer thought about learning and training this way:

> I think that's human nature--most people want to learn and want to grow in a position. I would imagine that would be a motivating factor. I think a lot of people equate personal development with also getting ahead. So, if I want to get to the next level; what type of things do I need to work on for myself, right now?

Table 2
Goals in Management Training Programs as Reported by Interviewees

Company Goals	Management Trainee Goals
Build a Solid Team	Career Movement
Consistency	Wanting to Learn
Structure	Growing in Your Position
Strengthen the Company	Going Forward
Internal Promotion	
Increase Productivity	
Continuity of Managers	

The training content in these programs was mainly job specific. "Teaching people different procedures in the store," was one manager's answer. The attainment of these objectives included

operating procedures and fashion theory—"We call it merchandising." However, home office trainers reported that the soft-skill, human relation areas, such as time management, communication, leadership, and others, were also included in training competencies.

2. Who did the training? Where and when was training held?

Managers conducted most all of the in-store training, usually technical and store operation skills. As has previously been mentioned, training managers is time consuming. The time constraints of store or department managers left teaching the trainee lessons "on the side" and in between times. Human characteristics play an important part in how and what each manager taught the new managers. One manager stated that attitude was everything.

> On my level I try, I try to make it--to have my employees be more responsible for themselves. When I interview someone I stress right up front that they have to get to work on time. I was stressed that at a young age. I grew up on a farm and I always had stuff to do. But, sometimes you don't want to go to work, but in reality most people have to. I stressed get here on time. I think that's the most important--it starts your day off--it's, let's get up and know you have to do this and not, you know, say you didn't have a job, I mean your attitude towards everything is just down the tubes, I think.

Some training, usually the soft-skill training sessions, was conducted in corporate home offices, conducted by home office or human resources personnel. All the interviewees said that training was held during the trainee's working hours. Training sites were most often located within the store, with some off-site training being conducted. One manager commented,

> Through experience, it's the best way and really the only way. You can be taught in the classroom, but you actually are thrown into a situation--presentation, where it's real and it's live and you have to make a decision.

3. What methods and assessment techniques did the trainers use? Did the trainee receive feedback?

The methods used most often for training were hands-on, on-the-job training for technical objectives. Classroom, role play, and other methods were used to teach human relation objectives (Table 3). Both managers and trainers mentioned mentoring. Geiger-DuMond and Boyle (1995) suggested a well-designed mentoring program would help develop strong managers. The participants of this study acknowledged that mentoring is a growing method in retail training. One interviewee said:

> And I was very fortunate to have another department manager who was my buddy, who I worked really close with. Because, when we first opened the store, they over hired managers. Then it decreased, slowly. So, I was working very closely with her and she took me under her wing and trained me. So, I was very fortunate to have that happen to me.

Table 3
Methods Used In Retail Management Training Programs of Study Participants

Methods
On-the-Job
Classroom Lecture
Seminar
Coaching
Delegation
Mentoring
Buddy System
Role Playing
Discussions
Case Studies
Videos
Training Manuals
Checklists
Group Training

When asked what assessment tools were used in their management training programs, the interviewees responded that observation was used most often. Other assessment tools, such as exams, were also used. "I'm a firm believer in 'inspect what you expect.' If you get 86% on the skills assessment, congratulations we're going on."

The interviewees said that feedback to the trainee was usually immediate. Self-evaluation techniques and written performance evaluations were used. Managers used self-assessment when quarterly reviews, promotions, or pay raises were discussed. Self-evaluation was also used in conjunction with action plans. In one case, a store manager was training an assistant manager to be a store manager. She spoke about how she used self-evaluation techniques.

> Yes, we would ask them to [do them] more formally as the assistant grows with the company; self-evaluations are built into every evaluation period. So, for any position in the field they should be doing a self-evaluation . . . the store manager would ask an assistant, 'where do you rate yourself?'

Table 4
Assessment Tools in Retail Management Training Programs as Reported by Interviewees

Assessment Tools
Observation
Oral Questioning
Group Presentations
Checklists
Action Plans
Written Tests
Self-Evaluation
Performance Evaluations
Secret Shops

4. Were evaluation procedures used in the companies' training programs? How did the trainer measure the effectiveness of a particular program? How were goals and objectives of the total program evaluated?

Determining training program evaluation techniques varied within these companies. From the store level perspective, some interviewees considered quarterly reviews and checklists as means of evaluating program effectiveness. Evaluation procedures included, but were not limited to, performance reviews, written examinations, and observations (see Table 5). Precise program evaluation was not performed regularly, if at all. A trainer commented:

> I honestly would like to see more of that [total program evaluation] done. [The training manager] and I talk about [it], but we lose that 'learning evaluation.' But, we're working on ways now to gauge how has their performance changed after it [the training program]. It just so hard to manage with the number of stores that we have. But, that's our--one of our goals. But, it isn't formally in place yet. We get a lot of informal, subjective feedback. But nothing formal.

Table 5
Training Program Evaluation Techniques as Reported by Interviewees

Evaluation Techniques
Quarterly Reviews
Observation
Sales Per Transaction
Written Exam
Skills Assessment
Class Enrollment
Management Turnover
Secret Shops
Feedback

Exact figures for management turnover rate, which could allow for a clearer measurement of program effectiveness were neither kept nor known by the interviewees. Although for her store, one manager noted:

> [We lose] managers who have been here [as little as] two months just as quickly as those people that have been here [as long as] 20 years. If we lose one more manager it will be 100% turnover rate in a year and a half.

Communication among managers and senior personnel was perceived to be lacking by most of the interviewees. Disillusionment with the training program and lack of overall assessment was expressed. One interviewee noted:

> I think it is that we don't deliver what we promise to deliver in an interview. I think we say, you know, we'll train you, you'll receive feedback. This is the expectation of the company. And, I think, a lot of people become disillusioned--people that have left the company. I've had assistants that have left, who said this just wasn't what I thought it was going to be. Or, as a store manager, that did not do a good enough job training them initially. Obviously, there are some personal reasons and things like that. But, most often, associate ranks as well, we don't deliver what we promised.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This study presented the managers' and trainers' descriptions and perceptions of their companies retail management programs. An internal understanding of the content, objectives, methods, assessment, and evaluation tools used in retail management training programs can be appreciated. Reviewing these programs from the perspectives of the people who directly affect and are directly influenced by the training is an approach not used uniformly by training program developers, as evidenced by the lack of program evaluations described by the participants in the study.

Apparel retailing in the United States has gone through many changes, from the small owner-run businesses of the 1800s and early 1900s, to the multi-chain organizations of today. In the 1990s, retail corporations, for the most part, are large conglomerates. Mergers, acquisitions, and restructuring of departments, divisions, and even whole companies have set the current direction in retail corporations.

Most of these multi-chained retailers had recognized the need to educate and train their employees if their goals to satisfy the consumer and make a profit were to be met. However, educating and developing top retail managers comes with a cost, an outlay of both management's time and company's money. According to the interviewees, neither of these resources was used adequately by any of the companies.

Retailing has been in constant transition. As documented by the study, training programs also have been continually changing. Not only has organizational restructuring necessitated change in the merchandising content of training programs, but education in technological advances also has been included for the company to remain competitive. New technology, computers, and e-mail, for example, have changed the way report filing and scheduling has been done. In some companies, this has resulted in a need for computer classes pertaining to the companies' software applications.

The consumer market also has changed. In the 1990s, the retailing industry has become more consumer driven than in the past. Customer service has been determined to be a primary strategy of retail companies. Training departments, in off-price as well as specialty and department stores, have recognized this and have developed programs to improve the quality of customer service. Everyone of the participants interviewed mentioned quality customer service as being vital for their company.

Not only have the consumer markets changed, but also retail employees and managers face different challenges. Lifestyles and demographics of employees and the responsibilities of managers have stimulated training departments to try to accommodate schedules and include more

educational objectives pertaining to human relations. Courses in leadership training, learning styles, diversity, and time management have been offered.

Some training programs have been designed to be both learner and company goal oriented. Methods used in the industry have tried to meet both of those issues by using various techniques. For job specific skills, such as store procedures and merchandising, manager-trainers used on-the-job approaches such as mentoring, buddy system, coaching, and delegation. On the one hand, on-the-job training gives a manager an extra person on the staff to rely on when customer traffic increases; but, on the other hand, finding time for a manager-trainee is difficult for many managers.

Training topics such as communications, self-esteem building, and leadership have been taught using role playing, case studies, and group seminars. Usually, as noted in the study's interviews, most of this type of training was done off-site, customarily in a training center, and with a company trainer.

Although, in the study's literature review, computer methods of training were mentioned, interviewees within the study did not suggest them. The exception was the use of computer training for new software applications having to do with the cash register and employee scheduling. More hands-on and trainer-trainee methods were used in these areas by participants of this research.

Trainers, managers, and literature have maintained that the day-to-day operations of a store were best learned on-the-job. As documented in the study, learning by doing and the guidance of a mentor were used to develop a quality manager able to deal with technical problems as well as employee relation problems.

As some studies had indicated (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Edwards, 1950; Bluestone, et al. 1981; and Berardinelli et. al., 1995), training programs should also include education in communicating, organizing, and leadership competencies. Managers needed and wanted these human relation courses, but also wanted practical applications and examples so that knowledge could be applied in the store.

The communication of existing and new programs was not constant in the retail companies studied by this research. The rapid expansion and restructuring of retail corporations had developed communications and consistency problems. Some personnel in the field did not know what programs were available to them, and if they did, they often felt that their company's senior management did not listen or were not aware of store management problems.

The time constraints that managers had to contend with made it very difficult for training new managers. Retail management responsibility had grown to not only include merchant-related duties but also included training obligations. All trainers and managers thought that a formalized, consistent manager training program needed the necessary time to be able to develop a quality manager.

Lastly, although assessment techniques were being used for individual program objectives, evaluations for the overall management training programs were inconclusive. These respondents seemed unable to distinguish between the assessment of trainees, who have undergone company training and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the training program itself. The respondents repeated the same methods and measures when queried about assessment tools and program

evaluation methods. It is also possible that none of the companies employed a systematic means of establishing program effectiveness. Managers and trainers both claimed that program evaluations were either inconsistent or non-existent.

Implications

This study has provided a qualitative approach to researching education and management training programs in the apparel retail industry. This non-statistical approach allowed the researcher to describe the perceptions of those interviewed; how they thought their training programs were in their own words. The implications of this multiple-case study research are drawn from the interviews conducted. The descriptions and explanations are as were perceived by the interviewees. Construct validity and reliability techniques were built into the research design, allowing for replication and induction in other cases.

The study, in presenting the managers' and trainers' descriptions and perceptions of their companies retail management programs, provides an internal understanding of the content objectives, methods, assessment, and evaluation tools used in retail management training programs. Reviewing these programs from the perspectives of the people who directly effect and are directly influenced by the training is an approach not used uniformly by training program developers, as evidenced by the lack of program evaluations described by the participants in the study.

This multiple-case study explored and described the education and training used by three major retail apparel companies to develop their managers. The interviews told the stories of those directly influenced by the programs. Experienced and new managers and trainers commented on the questions raised by the study. These individual observations documented a picture of what is the real world in the management education and training programs of these retail companies, today.

Recommendations

The development and application of a successful apparel retail management training program could help satisfy the primary goals of companies in the retail industry, specifically to make a profit and satisfy the customers. The analysis of the findings in the study has resulted in the following recommendations:

1. The content of management training programs for apparel retail managers should be continually updated to include both new technological advances in retailing and human relations areas to accommodate the changes in retail technology and the changes in personnel lifestyle needs. Since the apparel retail industry is changing constantly, the training program directors should update the structure of their training programs accordingly.

Management trainee selection could be benefited with the development of specific criteria related to a particular store's needs. Companies should continue to look at internal and external sources for management staffing in order to bring fresh ideas and continuity to the management process.

2. The training programs should continue to include all store employees--supervisors and experienced employees, as well as managers and trainers to help train new managers.

Specific times need to be scheduled, away from the store, to allow managers to train their manager candidates. Training schedules need to be flexible to oblige the different learning styles of trainees

as well as the store's traffic flows and business needs.

Training departments should continue to use all types of learning methods. In particular, mentoring with an experienced manager should be encouraged. A structured program should be developed.

Off-site training locations, away from the store, are needed for managers to attend seminars. These should be scheduled at regular intervals, more than once a year, but not every week. This time allows managers to compare notes and to discuss common problems, in addition to attaining the seminar's intended objective.

3. The trainers should continue to assess their trainee's progress in meeting specific educational objectives. The trainer-managers and company trainers should continue the use of observational techniques, oral questioning, written exams, and project completion. Prompt and immediate feedback should be provided to trainees regarding their progress.

4. The company program directors should evaluate their apparel retail management training programs. Techniques for evaluating the overall effectiveness of training programs should be developed and implemented. Program goals and objectives must be clearly defined and communicated to trainers and trainees.

All managers who leave an organization should complete an exit interview. An analysis of managers' reasons for leaving the company could help with developing or changing specific training programs. Manager turnover rate should be available to the training program directors.

5. The companies should address the need to improve communication among entry-level, middle, and senior management. It is not what is happening that is most important, it is knowing what is happening. Company loyalty and employee satisfaction increases with both informal (oral) and formal (written) communications.

The combination of time and money, communication, consistency, evaluation, and standardization in training is paramount if a company wants to satisfy its customers and continue to be profitable.

6. An equally important recommendation is that educators in post-secondary institutions continue to emphasize courses in communications and feedback and assessment techniques. Field practica and internships should be used to supplement classes and provide students with industry-based experiences.

For Further Study

The significance of the study was founded in the relevance of its practical applications. The issues that were discussed were of importance to the retail industry and to educators of retail and merchandising students. In retail, senior and middle management need to communicate with their managers and trainers. In academia, educators need to communicate with retailers. In both instances, the communication of needs and wants could help to improve education, promote the growth of companies, satisfy consumers, and increase job performance and satisfaction.

More studies documenting other retail management training programs are essential. Replication of the study, using the same methodology, very possibly could result in approximately the same

results, because of the researcher's use of the multiple-case study format. However, the use of different companies, different trainers, different managers, at a different time in a different state, would enhance even further the reliability of the study.

In conclusion, this qualitative study gave an insight that quantitative research could not have realized. People--what they thought, how they perceived situations, and why they did what they did, giving their own interpretations of what their company's retail management training program was--have brought forth an awareness and description of the retail training program arena. They told what their experience was.

Since retailing is people intensive, attaining and retaining quality people is necessary for the survival of apparel retail companies. The development and implementation of a quality management training program could help in meeting the goals of retailers.

The development and application of a successful apparel retail management training program could help satisfy the primary goals of companies in the retail industry, specifically to make a profit and satisfy the customers. Successful management training programs could also help satisfy employee needs of self-fulfillment and job performance.

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